

March 8, 1990

LB 160, 247  
LR 239

priority bill come up late in the afternoon but you look down the agenda, there aren't any easy ones before us. We're just going to have to begin, I think, sloshing our way through the very difficult bills. And this, frankly, this one and its companion bill coming up, I'm sure, are going to elicit major comments from members on the floor. It's a very significant piece of legislation. It alters the way in which higher education in Nebraska is organized and the manner in which it is governed. Very little bit of background first on the higher education issue. As you recall, we, as a Legislature, probably for the past 30 years have been called upon to make some changes in the way higher education has been governed. I can recall a year ago Senator Warner bringing in his orange crate full of studies that have been done on higher education over the past decades. The Legislature has never quite been able to come to grips with the higher education issue. We have currently three different independent sectors of higher education, public higher education, with no real means of providing coordination among those three groups. Last year, LB 247 was introduced by me, along with, I believe it was LB 160 that was introduced by Senators Warner, Langford and Kristensen. I probably left some people out on that one but those are the three whose names I do recall. LB 247 provided for a study of higher education. LB 160 provided for renaming Kearney, Kearney State University, and also shifting Kearney State into the University of Nebraska system. That bill passed. Over the last year then, over the last summer a commission was appointed by the Governor to study...to supervise a study of higher education. A consultant was hired, Widmeyer and Associates came to Nebraska and conducted a study of higher education, focusing on governance during the first year, as their study implied that they would do. They recommended four changes. Change number one, that the community college system remain essentially as it is. Number two, that the current Coordinating Commission on Postsecondary Education be abolished and that a commission on higher education be established providing representation from the Governor, the Legislature, the Commissioner of Education, the four-year public institutions, the community colleges and the private sector to serve as a forum to provide coordination, discussion, sense of vision for the way all of higher education should function together. The third recommendation was that the current governing boards of the university system and the State College Board of Trustees be abolished and that a new coordinating board be established that would have coordination responsibilities over all seven senior level campuses in the state, Kearney,